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Listing of Claims

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the subject application:

1. (currently amended) An image reading apparatus, comprising:

an image sensor configured to read an image of an original document to generate read image data;

a shading correction device configured to perform a shading correction on said read image data; and

an abnormal white image pixel detection device configured to examine a value of standard white image data on a pixel-by-pixel basis to determine whether or not pixels are abnormal, wherein the standard white image data is acquired by reading a white image which is a standard for a shading correction,

wherein before the image of the original document is read, a previously specified predetermined value corresponding to a peak value of the standard white image data is stored for use set as [[the]] a standard white image data for the pixels a pixel that are is determined to be abnormal by said abnormal white image pixel detection device.

2. (original) An Image reading apparatus, comprising:

an image sensor configured to read an image of an original document to generate read image data;

a shading correction device configured to perform a shading correction on said read image data;

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an abnormal white image pixel detection device configured to examine a value of standard white image data on a pixel-by-pixel basis so as to determine whether or not pixels are abnormal, wherein the standard white image data is acquired by reading a white image which is a standard for a shading correction;

an image data correction device configured to correct a value of continuous pixels, which is determined to be abnormal when the image of the original document is read, based on a value of a normal pixel around the continuous abnormal pixels on which the shading correction is performed, when the number of the continuous abnormal pixels is within a predetermined allowable number,

wherein a previously specified value is stored for use as the standard white image data for pixels that are determined to be abnormal by said abnormal white image pixel detection device, and wherein the value of the standard white image data for all of pixels in a region in which the number of the pixels which are determined to be abnormal and for which the previously specified value is stored exceeds the predetermined allowable number, is replaced with a predetermined value.

3. (original) The image reading apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the predetermined value is obtained by multiplying a peak value of the standard white image data by a previously determined value of less than 1.

4. (original) The image reading apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the previously specified value is one of an upper limit and a lower limit of the standard white image data.

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5. (currently amended) ~~[[The]]~~ An image reading apparatus according to claim 1,
comprising:

an image sensor configured to read an image of an original document to generate read
image data;

a shading correction device configured to perform a shading correction on said read image
data; and

an abnormal white image pixel detection device configured to examine a value of
standard white image data on a pixel-by-pixel basis to determine whether or not pixels are
abnormal, wherein the standard white image data is acquired by reading a white image which is a
standard for a shading correction,

wherein a previously specified value is stored for use as the standard white image data for
the pixels that are determined to be abnormal by said abnormal white image pixel detection
device, and

wherein the previously specified value is one of a upper limit and a lower limit of the
standard white image data.

6. (currently amended) An image reading method, comprising:
acquiring standard white image data by reading a white image;
determining whether or not the standard white image data is abnormal by examining the
standard white image data on a pixel-by-pixel basis; and
storing before the image of the original document is read, setting a previously-specified
predetermined value corresponding to a peak value of the standard white image data as [[the]] a
standard white image data for pixels a pixel that are is determined to be abnormal.

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7. (original) An image reading method, comprising:
acquiring standard white image data by reading a white image;
determining whether or not the standard white image data is abnormal by examining the standard white image data on a pixel-by-pixel basis;
correcting a value of a first region of pixels, which is determined to be abnormal when an image of an original document is read, based on a value of a normal pixel around the first region on which a shading correction has been performed, when the number of pixels in said first region is within a predetermined allowable number;
replacing the value of the standard white image data for the pixels in a second region, in which the number of pixels stored with the previously specified value exceeds the predetermined allowable number, with a predetermined value.

8. (currently amended) An image reading apparatus, comprising:
an image sensor means for reading an image of an original document to generate read image data;
a shading correction means for performing a shading correction on the read image data;
and
an abnormal white image pixel detection means for examining a value of standard white image data on a pixel-by-pixel basis to determine whether or not pixels are abnormal, wherein the standard white image data is acquired by reading a white image which is a standard for a shading correction,

wherein before the image of the original document is read, a ~~previously specified~~

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~~predetermined value corresponding to a peak value of the standard white image data is stored for use set as [[the]] a standard white image data for pixels a pixel that are is determined to be abnormal by said abnormal white image pixel detection means.~~

9. (original) An image reading apparatus, comprising:

an image sensor means for reading an image of an original document to generate read image data;

a shading correction means for performing a shading correction on the read image data;

an abnormal white image pixel detection means for examining a value of standard white image data on a pixel-by-pixel basis to determine whether or not pixels are abnormal, wherein the standard white image data is acquired by reading a white image which is a standard for a shading correction;

an image data correction means for correcting a value of continuous pixels, which is determined to be abnormal when the image of the original document is read, based on a value of a normal pixel around the continuous abnormal pixels on which the shading correction is performed, when the number of the continuous abnormal pixels is within a predetermined allowable number, and

wherein a previously specified value is stored for use as the standard white image data for pixels that are determined to be abnormal by said abnormal white image pixel detection means, and wherein the value of the standard white image data for all of pixels in a region in which the number of the pixels which are determined to be abnormal and for which with the previously specified value is stored exceeds the predetermined allowable number, is replaced with a predetermined value.

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10. (original) The image reading apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the predetermined value is obtained by multiplying a peak value of the standard white image data by a previously determined value of less than 1.

11. (original) The image reading apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the previously specified value is one of an upper limit and a lower limit of the standard white image data.

12. (currently amended) ~~[[The]]~~ An image reading apparatus according to claim 8,
comprising:

an image sensor means for reading an image of an original document to generate read image data;

a shading correction means for performing a shading correction on the read image data;

an abnormal white image pixel detection means for examining a value of standard white image data on a pixel-by-pixel basis to determine whether or not pixels are abnormal, wherein the standard white image data is acquired by reading a white image which is a standard for a shading correction;

an image data correction means for correcting a value of continuous pixels, which is determined to be abnormal when the image of the original document is read, based on a value of a normal pixel around the continuous abnormal pixels on which the shading correction is performed, when the number of the continuous abnormal pixels is within a predetermined allowable number, and

wherein a previously specified value is stored for use as the standard white image data for

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pixels that are determined to be abnormal by said abnormal white image pixel detection means, and wherein the value of the standard white image data for all of pixels in a region in which the number of the pixels which are determined to be abnormal and for which with the previously specified value is stored exceeds the predetermined allowable number, is replaced with a predetermined value, and

wherein the previously specified value is one of an upper limit and a lower limit of the standard white image data.

13. (currently amended) A computer ~~program-product including~~ readable medium tangibly embodying a computer program ~~configured of instructions executable by a computer~~ to perform the steps recited in claim 6.

14. (currently amended) A computer ~~program-product including~~ readable medium tangibly embodying a computer program ~~configured of instructions executable by a computer~~ to perform the steps recited in claim 7.

15. (original) An image reading method comprising:

reading a white plate to generate white image data comprising white pixel values for respective pixel positions;

examining the white image data to detect abnormal white pixel values;

replacing white pixel values detected as abnormal in the examining step with replacement pixel values to thereby generate shading correction data having at least one region of replacement pixel values;

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reading a document to generate document image data comprising document pixel values for respective pixel positions related to said pixel positions of the white image data;

identifying pixel positions of abnormal document pixel values in said document image data;

performing a shading correction on said document image data to replace document pixel values with corrected document pixel values derived through a process that involves using at least said shading correction data and said document image data, to thereby generate corrected document image data; and

providing said corrected original image data as an output.

16. (original) A method as in claim 15 in which the step of replacing white pixel values comprises using first replacement values set at one of an upper limit and a lower limit of pixel values in said white image data.

17. (original) A method as in claim 16 in which the step of replacing white pixel values further comprises selectively using second replacement values derived by weighting respective white pixel values with weighting factors of less than unity.

18. (original) A method as in claim 17 comprising using said first replacement values for abnormal white pixel in a region within a first size and using said second replacement values for abnormal white pixels values in a region exceeding said first size.

19. (original) A method as in claim 18 in which said shading correction further

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comprises replacing selected abnormal document pixel values with document pixel values near a region of the selected abnormal document pixel values.

20. (currently amended) A computer ~~program-product comprising~~ readable medium tangibly embodying a computer program ~~configured~~ of instructions executable by a computer to perform the steps of claim 19.

21. (currently amended) A computer ~~program-product comprising~~ readable medium tangibly embodying a computer program ~~configured~~ of instructions executable by a computer to perform the steps of claim 18.

22. (currently amended) A computer ~~program-product comprising~~ readable medium tangibly embodying a computer program ~~configured~~ of instructions executable by a computer to perform the steps of claim 17.

23. (currently amended) A computer ~~program-product comprising~~ readable medium tangibly embodying a computer program ~~configured~~ of instructions executable by a computer to perform the steps of claim 16.

24. (original) An image reading apparatus comprising:

a reading and digitizing station scanning a white plate to generate white image data comprising white pixel values for respective pixel positions, and scanning a document to generate document image data comprising document pixel values for respective pixel positions

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related to said pixel positions of the white image data;

an abnormal pixel detecting circuit coupled to said reading and digitizing station to receive therefrom said white pixel values and identify abnormal white pixel values;

a shading correction circuit coupled to said reading and digitizing station and said abnormal pixel detection circuit to replace white pixel values identified as abnormal with replacement pixel values to thereby generate shading correction data having at least one region of replacement pixel values, and to use said shading correction data to carry out shading correction of document pixel values to thereby produce shading-corrected document pixel data;

an abnormal pixel correction circuit coupled to the shading correction circuit to identify abnormal pixel values in said document image data and replace selected abnormal pixel values in said shading-corrected document image data with document pixel values not identified as abnormal by the abnormal pixel value correction circuit.

25. (original) An image reading apparatus as in claim 23 in which said abnormal pixel value correction circuit comprises a system for identifying as selected abnormal pixel values only pixel values for pixels in a region of said document image data below a selected size.